

BACCALAURÉAT GÉNÉRAL

SESSION DE 2003

ANGLAIS

LANGUE VIVANTE 1

Série L

Durée de l'épreuve 3 heures – Coefficient : 4

L'usage de la calculatrice et du dictionnaire n'est pas autorisé

Ce sujet comporte 7 pages numérotées de 1 à 7.

Compréhension et expression	14 points
Traduction	6 points

The car smelled like somebody else's life. Like freedom.

It was parked right in the window of the showroom, a wedge-shaped sports car which, even with its top off, looked as sleek and compact as a muscle.

Naturally it was red - a flaming, testosterone-stuffed red.

When I was a little bit younger, such blatant macho corn¹ would have made me sneer, or snigger, or puke, or all of the above.

Now I found it didn't bother me at all. In fact, it seemed to be just what I was looking for at this stage of my life.

I'm not really the kind of man who knows what cars are called, but I had made it my business - furtively lingering over the ads in glossy magazines - to find out the handle of this particular hot little number². Yes, its true. Our eyes had met before.

But its name didn't really matter. I just loved the way it looked. And that smell. Above all, that smell. That anything-can-happen smell. What was it about that smell?

Amidst the perfume of leather, rubber and all those yards of freshly sprayed steel, you could smell a heartbreaking newness, a newness so shocking that it almost overwhelmed me. This newness intimated another world that was limitless and free, an open road leading to all the unruined days of the future. Somewhere they had never heard of traffic cones or physical decay or my thirtieth birthday.

I knew that smell from somewhere and I recognised the way it made me feel. Funnily enough, it reminded me of that feeling you get when you hold a newborn baby.[...]

"You only live once," the car salesman said, his heels clicking across the showroom floor. I smiled politely, indicating that I would have to think that one over.

"Are you in the market for some serious fun?" he said. "Because if the MGE is about one thing, it's about fun."

While he gave me his standard sales pitch³, he was sizing me up, trying to decide if I was worth a test drive.

He was pushy, but not so pushy that it made your flesh crawl. He was just doing his job. And despite my weekend clothes - which because of the nature of my work were not really so different from my weekday clothes - he must have seen a man of substance. A fast-track career looking for some matching wheels. Young, free and single. A life as carefree as a lager commercial. How wrong can you be?

"This model has the Variable Valve Control system⁴," he said, with what seemed like genuine enthusiasm. "The opening period of the inlet valves can be varied by altering the rotational speed of each cam⁵ lobe."

What the fuck was he going on about? Was it something to do with the engine?

"A total babe magnet," he said, noting my dumbfounded expression. "Plenty of poke. A young single guy couldn't do any better than the MGE."

This was my kind of sales pitch. Forget the technical guff, just tell me that you can lose yourself in a car like this. Let me know you can lose yourself. That's what I wanted to hear.

The salesman was distracted by something on the street, and I followed his gaze out of the showroom's plate-glass wall.

He was looking at a tall blonde woman holding the hand of a small boy wearing a Star Wars T-shirt. They were surrounded by bags of supermarket shopping. And they were watching us.

Even framed by all those plastic carrier bags and chaperoning a little kid, the woman was the kind that you look at more than once.

What you noticed about her child - and he was certainly her child - was that he was carrying a long, plastic tube with a dull light glowing faintly inside.

If you had been to the cinema at any time over the last twenty years you would recognise it as a light sabre, traditional weapon of the Jedi Knights. This one needed new batteries.

The beautiful woman was smiling at me and the salesman. The little kid pointed his light sabre, as if about to strike us down.

"Daddy," he mouthed from the other side of the plate-glass wall which divided us. You couldn't hear him, but that's what he was saying.

"My wife and son," I said, turning away, but not before I caught the disappointment in the salesman's eyes. "Got to go."

Daddy. That's me. Daddy.

Man and Boy Tony Parsons (2000)

- 1) corn = baratin
- 2) particular hot little number = ce petit bijou
- 3) sales pitch = boniment de vendeur
- 4) variable valve control system = contrôle modulable des soupapes
- 5) cam = came

COMPREHENSION ET EXPRESSION

1 – How many parts could this excerpt be divided into?

a) Give the lines for each part.

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b) Give a title to the parts.

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c) Justify your title by writing a one sentence presentation of the corresponding part.

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2 – In lines 7 to 8, the narrator says “*It seemed to be what I was looking for at this stage of my life*”

a) What does he mean by the words *this stage of my life* ? Find a phrase that refers more precisely to it in the first half of the text.

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b) How does the narrator feel about *this stage* ? Quote the text to support your view.

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